

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 13, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We write to request to allow Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) beneficiaries to purchase hot food items from retailers that already accept electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards.

Prior to the COVID-19 public health crisis, 37 million Americans relied on SNAP benefits to buy food each month. Unfortunately, in the midst of this crisis, over 16 million Americans have filed for unemployment benefits in a two-week time span. No doubt, unemployment rates will continue to skyrocket. As grocery stores struggle to keep their shelves stocked, more families will become food insecure, and those who are already food insecure will continue to face significant hurdles in feeding their families. SNAP beneficiaries also need more support when public transportation use is discouraged, and when going outside in densely populated areas is dangerous.

Under normal circumstances, SNAP benefits cannot be used to purchase hot food; allowing flexibility through a waiver for the duration of the pandemic, however, would ease the burden families face to provide nutritious foods to their families. Further, for essential employees who qualify for SNAP and are risking their lives, the ability to purchase hot food will ease the burden of having to cook full meals during this stressful time. These waivers have been requested by governors across the country.

Therefore, we strongly urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture to immediately issue hot food waivers for states where a major disaster has been declared in addition to a national emergency. We also call on the Food and Nutrition Service to extend its approval of hot food waivers to this pandemic national emergency. While this may differ from the “Disaster SNAP Guidance” (pg. 31) issued by your agency in July 2014, we encourage you to establish alternate and broader policy during the current public health emergency. Language in the Take Responsibility for Workers and Families Act (H.R. 6379) emphasized the urgency of allowing SNAP participants to purchase “hot foods” or “hot food products ready for immediate consumption” from SNAP-authorized grocers, and while this language was not included in the CARES Act, we believe that your agency has the authority to implement these waivers without this change in law.

We look forward to your response on allowing EBT retailers to accept SNAP benefits for the purchase of hot food.

Sincerely,



/s/ Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

/s/ Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress

/s/ Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress

/s/ Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

/s/ Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

/s/ James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

/s/ Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

/s/ Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress

/s/ Joseph P. Kennedy, III  
Member of Congress

/s/ Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress

/s/ Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

/s/ Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

/s/ Kendra S. Horn  
Member of Congress



/s/ Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

/s/ Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress

/s/ Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress

/s/ John B. Larson  
Member of Congress

/s/ Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress

/s/ Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

/s/ Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

/s/ Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

/s/ Suzan DelBene  
Member of Congress

/s/ Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

/s/ Bill Foster  
Member of Congress

/s/ Joseph D. Morelle  
Member of Congress

/s/ Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress

/s/ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress

/s/ John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress

/s/ G. K. Butterfield  
Member of Congress

/s/ Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress

/s/ Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress

/s/ Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

/s/ Adam Smith  
Member of Congress

/s/ Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

/s/ David Trone  
Member of Congress

/s/ Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

/s/ Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress

/s/ David Price  
Member of Congress

/s/ Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.  
Member of Congress

/s/ Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

/s/ Bill Keating  
Member of Congress

/s/ Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress

/s/ Susan Wild  
Member of Congress

/s/ Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

/s/ Daniel T. Kildee  
Member of Congress

/s/ Sanford D. Bishop  
Member of Congress

Cc:  
Speaker Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy